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The First Lesson

HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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GANDHIJI'S PRESS STATEMENT

On the eve of his departure for Shrirampore Gandhiji issued the following statement to the Press:

I find myself in the midst of exaggeration and falsity. I am unable to discover the truth. There is terrible mutual distrust. Oldest friendships have snapped. Truth and *ahimsa* by which I swear, and which have to my knowledge sustained me for sixty years, seem to fail to show the attributes I have ascribed to them.

To test them, or better, to test myself, I am going to a village called Shrirampore, cutting myself away from those who have been with me all these years, and who have made life easy for me. I am taking Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose as my Bengali teacher and interpreter and Shri Parsuram, who has been my most devoted, selfless and silent stenographer.

The other workers, whom I have brought with me will each distribute themselves in other villages of Noakhali to do the work of peace, if it is at all possible, between the two communities. They are, unfortunately, all non-Bengalis except little Abha. They will, therefore, be accompanied by one Bengali worker each as teacher and interpreter, even like Prof. N. K. Bose will be to me.

Distribution work and selection work will be done by Sri Satish Chandra Dasgupta of the Khadi Pratisthan. My ideal is to live in a local Muslim League family, but I see that I must not wait for that happy day. I must meanwhile establish such contacts with the Muslims as I can in their own villages. My suggestion to the League Ministers is that they should give me one honest and brave Muslim to accompany one equally honest and brave Hindu for each affected village. They should guarantee at the cost of their lives if need be, the safety of the returning Hindu refugees. I am sorry to have to confess that without some such thing it seems to me difficult to induce them to return to their villages.

From all accounts received by me, life is not as yet smooth and safe for the minority community in the villages. They, therefore, prefer to live as exiles from their own homes, crops, plantations and surroundings, and live on inadequate and ill-balanced doles.

Many friends from outside Bengal have written to me to allow them to come for peace work, but I have strongly dissuaded them from coming. I would love to let them come if and when I see light through this impenetrable darkness.

In the meantime, both Pyarelal and I have decided to suspend all other activities in the shape of correspondence, including the heavy work of the *Harijan* and the allied weeklies. I have asked Shri Kishorlal, Shri Kakasaheb, Shri Vinoba and Shri Narhari Parikh to edit the weeklies jointly and severally. Pyarelal and I may, if our work permits, send stray contributions from our respective villages. Correspondence will be attended to from Sevagram.

How long this suspense will last, is more than I can say. This much, however, I can. I do not propose to leave East Bengal till I am satisfied that mutual trust has been established between the two communities and the two have resumed the even tenor of their life in their villages. Without this there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan — only slavery awaits India, torn asunder by mutual strife and engrossed in barbarity.

No one need at present be disturbed about my low diet. On receipt of the following wire from Dr. Rajendra Prasad:

> Letter received. Have already wired quiet. There have been no incidents for a week now. Situation satisfactory. Most earnestly desire resumption of normal diet. Myself going Delhi 19th.,

I resumed goat's milk from yesterday and propose to revert to normal diet as early as the system permits. The future is in God's keeping.

Kazirkhil, 20-11-'46

OUR LAHORE BRANCH

Readers will please note that a branch of the Navajivan Karyalaya has recently been opened at Lahore (Bright View Building, Royal Park, McLeod Road). Copies of our four weeklies: *Harijan* (English), *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati), *Harijansevak* (Hindustani in Nagari script) and *Harijansevak* (Hindustani in Urdu script), as also copies of our Gujarati monthly, *Shikshan ane Sahitya*, and our publications will be available at the place. Subscriptions for the weeklies and the monthly will also be accepted. All sales of the *Harijan* and its various editions at Lahore will henceforth be handled by the branch office.

MANAGER

WEEKLY LETTER

Emerald green fields of paddy meet the eye just now in Noakhali District wherever you go. There has been a bumper crop this year such as has not been known for the last twelve years. But nature's bounty has been more than offset by the sadistic cruelty of man. The crop is in ear and about to ripen but a number of those who sowed them are not there to reap or garner. Some have been killed. Others have fled for safety to various refugee camps.

The question of the repatriation of the refugees is worrying the authorities as well as the various relief organizations. Unless they return to their homes early, they might lose the paddy and the betel nut crop which in their absence might be bagged by others. The problem bristles with difficulties. They have lost their all, they have no houses to live in. Without means of subsistence and without even a roof over their heads for shelter, where are they to go? they ask. Above all, where is the guarantee that they would be safe if they returned to their villages? To clear the atmosphere of terror and re-establish mutual confidence and goodwill is the problem of problems.

Tragedy Of Gopairbag

On the 8th instant Gandhiji accompanied by the Parliamentary Secretaries Janab Nasrullah Saheb and Abdur Rashid Saheb, Mr. McInerny the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police, Noakhali, motored from Chaumuhani to the village of Gopairbag. Here, buried deep in the midst of thick groves of slender arecanut and cocoanut palms whose tall tops seemed to meet overhead, are scattered five clusters of huts occupied by Hindu families, in the midst of nearly fifty times that number of Muslim families. One of these is a Patwari's house. Silken plantain leaves spread out in graceful arches under a sapphire blue sky. The loveliness of nature was spread all around. The air was delightfully fresh and cool. But the human scene that met the eye froze one's blood. There had been murder and arson. The place of worship had been desecrated. The corpses of slaughtered men were piled up in a heap in one corner of the courtyard and burnt. Charred remains of what was once flesh and blood bore witness to the grim tragedy. There were blood stains on the doorsteps of some of the houses. The *kutcha* floors in many houses had been dug up presumably in search of hidden cash or jewels. The odour of death still hung over the place. It was a picture of desolation. Three girls had been abducted from the house, two of whom were still missing.

Dattapara

On his way back at evening Gandhiji halted at Diwanbari at Dattapara where tact and presence of mind combined with good luck had enabled the Diwanji family to escape from the fate of the Patwari family at Gopairbag. The place itself has at present been turned into a refugee camp holding about 6000 refugees. Gandhiji discussed here with the district authorities the question of repatriation of the refugees to their respective homes. Some local Muslim League members had also been invited and took part in the discussion.

Addressing a meeting of Hindus and Muslims at evening, Gandhiji told them that it was a shame for both the Hindus and the Mussalmans that the Hindus should have to run away from their homes as they had done. It was a shame for the Muslims because it was out of fear of the Muslims that the Hindus had run away. Why should a human being inspire another with fear? It was no less a shame for the Hindus to have given way to craven fear. He had always said that man should fear none but God. The Government officials accompanying him were all anxious that they should return to their homes. To feed and clothe thousands in one place involved difficulties for the refugees as well as for the Government. The Government officials were ashamed of the fact that such things should have happened in their jurisdiction. He wanted them to forgive and forget what had happened in Noakhali and Tipperah. That did not mean that they were to become cowards. But it served no useful purpose to keep on recalling the unpleasant past. He hoped and prayed that the Hindus and Muslims of these parts would become friends once more. He knew the Hindus had suffered a lot and were suffering still. He would not ask them to return to their homes till at least one good Muslim and one good Hindu came forward to accompany them and stand surety for their safety in each village. He was sure there were plenty of good Hindus and good Muslims in these parts who would give the necessary guarantee.

A Muslim friend from the audience said they had already given them the assurance that they would look after them but the Hindus would not listen to them. Gandhiji replied that they should try to understand and appreciate the reasons of the Hindus' distrust and overcome their fear. A Hindu refugee got up and asked how they could have confidence in the assurances of the Muslims any more. When the trouble was threatening they had promised to look after them but had failed to protect them afterwards. Besides where were they to go and stay? They had lost their all. Were they to go back and stay in the jungles? And when fifty good Muslims in the village had failed to save them on the previous occasion, how would one good Muslim do so now? Gandhiji replied that the Government would see that their huts were rebuilt and they had food and clothing when they returned to their homes. Whatever might have happened in the past, if now one good Muslim and one good Hindu took the responsibility for their safety in each village, they could rely on their word backed as it would be by the collective invitation of all the Muslims in the village. If they were still afraid they were cowards and not even God could help the cowardly.

The next day Gandhiji shifted his camp to Dattapara in order to be able to visit more affected villages in the interior. After the evening prayer he addressed a huge gathering in which about 80% were

Muslims. It was a passionate appeal to their conscience. He talked to them of the purifying alchemy of God's name which was more potent even than the proverbial philosopher's stone. He asked them to search their hearts and tell him whether they really wanted the Hindus to come back and live in their midst as friends and neighbours. If they wanted them back, they should stand guarantee for their safety and self-respect, assure them that their daughters, sisters, and mothers would be regarded like the Muslims' own daughters, sisters and mothers. If not, they should plainly tell him so and he would ask the unfortunate refugees to migrate. But he himself would stay in their midst till their hearts were converted, live on what they might provide him and die there if necessary. The full text of the speech is reproduced elsewhere in these columns.

Several written questions were submitted to him at the end of the meeting. One of them was: how could the refugees have the confidence to go back when the hooligans who had harassed them were still at large? Gandhiji replied that it was the duty of the Government to round up the hooligans but his advice to the refugees was to leave the Government to attend to its duty. If the good Muslims invited them back wholeheartedly, they should return.

Further into the Interior

The 11th was Gandhiji's day of silence. All the same he visited the villages Noakhola, Sonachak and Khilpara, all in the Lakhimpur Thana. The journey was partly by motor and partly by boats which were punted with difficulty in *khals* that were choked with thickly tangled masses of water hyacinth. At Noakhola 8 people were said to have been murdered including a schoolboy of 15. Four skulls and charred remains of the bones were scattered all over the place. The houses had almost all been burnt down. In the house where the boy was murdered his school books and freshly written exercise books were strewn over the floor. The betel nut and the cocoanut trees surrounding the houses were scorched. Those that were not killed or did not run away were said to have been converted including a deaf-mute who by piteous signs showed the tuft of hair in a piece of cloth which had been removed from his head and to which he still clung. The few women that remained were all weeping and wailing in a heart-rending manner. At Sonachak the place of worship had been desecrated and set fire to. Broken images lay on footpaths and in the debris inside the ruined temple. In this village too the same piteous weeping and wailing of women met Gandhiji.

In a written message that was read out at the evening prayer gathering Gandhiji poured out the anguish which the sights which he had seen had filled him with. Wherever he had gone he had seen burnt houses and heard stories of looting and forcible conversions. Hindu women were without the auspicious vermilion mark on their heads and foreheads and without their conchshell bangles. How he wished that all Muslim brothers would condemn these atrocities with one voice so that the Hindus could go back to their homes and live there as they used to before the disturbances. Their houses would be rebuilt before they could go back. The Muslims should help in that. Such he believed was the injunction of the holy *Quran* too.

The next day at the evening prayer gathering which mostly consisted of refugees, Gandhiji again referred to the question of repatriation. The Moulvi Saheb, the Vice President of Union No. 6, who had addressed them before him had invited them in the name of the Mussalmans to return to their homes. But it was not so easy in action as it was in speech. Everyone was anxious to see the two communities live in peace and harmony once again. For that it was not necessary that they should have the same religion. He had seen awful sights of destruction. He had seen the terror-stricken faces of the sufferers. They had been forcibly converted once and they were afraid the same thing would be repeated. He wanted them to shed that fear. He alone deserved to live who refused to give up God's name. They must learn to face death rather than give up *Ramanama*. He was not enamoured of the military and the police. The function of the police was to arrest thieves and dacoits, that of the military to guard them against foreign aggression. The police and the military could not teach them to cease fighting among themselves and live as friends. He referred to the scheme for repatriation but it could work only if the Muslim League wished to have peace and fully co-operated. Shamsuddin Saheb was coming in two or three days. They would hear from him what the League Government wanted to do.

Visits to the village of Gomatoli and Nandigram completed Gandhiji's programme in the Lakhimpur Thana. In Nandigram the same scene of devastation that was seen in Noakhola and Khilpara confronted one. About 600 houses had been burnt down. Twisted and blackened pieces of corrugated sheets that once constituted roofings littered the ground among heaps of cinders and debris. A school building, a hostel and a hospital were reduced to ashes. Scorched cocoanut and arecanut palms marked the site of arson. The temple belonging to the leading family of the village had been desecrated here too.

A Cruel Joke

Gandhiji shifted his camp from Dattapara to Kazirkhil on the 14th afternoon. On the way he stopped at Shahpur where a public meeting had been arranged. Gandhiji had been told that there would be a big gathering at Shahpur. But someone had spread the rumour that he would be accompanied by the Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate and an armed guard who would utilize the occasion for making arrests with the result that very few people were in evidence when Gandhiji arrived there. "It is a cruel joke," remarked Gandhiji. For so far as he was concerned he had never wanted any police or district authority to accompany him. But the authorities said they could not take the risk of letting him go about unprotected.

It had been brought to his notice that in several places, while the local Mussalmans professed to be

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HARIJAN

December 1 1946

THE FIRST LESSON

Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate of Noakhali, addressing Gandhiji's evening prayer gathering at Dibanbari (Dattapara) made a pithy remark. As after a natural calamity like an earthquake, floods or an epidemic involving large masses of people, so after riots, the first requisites of rehabilitation and relief are food, clothing, shelter and primary medical aid. But of far greater importance than these is courage which is the basis of all virtues. Nothing could have been more opportune, he added, than Gandhiji's visit to Noakhali in the present juncture. For, courage cannot be doled out like rice or other items of relief. It has to be evoked from within and who could do it better than Gandhiji?

The Only Way

He could have little idea at that time that Gandhiji had anticipated him in that regard even before he had set foot on the soil of the Tipperah District. The first lesson was delivered at Chandpur when a group of 20 to 25 workers including the son of the late Babu Hardayal Nag and several representatives of various relief organizations met him in the dining saloon of the *Kiwi* on the morning of the 7th November. "What goes against the grain in me," Gandhiji told them, "is that a single individual can be forcibly converted or a single woman can be kidnapped or raped. So long as we feel we can be subjected to these indignities, we shall continue to be so subjected. If we say we cannot do without police or military protection, we really confess defeat even before the battle has begun. No police or military in the world can protect people who are cowards. Today you say, thousands of people are terrorizing a mere handful, so what can the latter do? But even a few individuals are enough to terrorize the whole mass, if the latter feel helpless. Your trouble is not numerical inferiority but the feeling of helplessness that has seized you and the habit of depending on others. The remedy lies with you. That is too why I am opposed to the idea of your evacuating from East Bengal *en masse*. It is no cure for impotence or helplessness."

"East Bengal is opposed to such a move," they replied.

"They should not leave", Gandhiji resumed. "20,000 able-bodied men prepared to die like brave men non-violently might today be regarded as a fairy tale. But it would be no fairy tale for every able-bodied man in a population of 20,000 to die like stalwart soldiers to a man in open fight. They will go down in history like the immortal five hundred of Leonidas who made Thermopylae." And he quoted the proud epitaph which marked the grave of the Thermopylae heroes:

> Stranger! Tell Sparta, here her sons are laid,
> Such was her law and we that law obeyed.

A False Cry

"I will proclaim from the housetops," he continued, "that it is the only condition under which you can live in East Bengal. You have asked for Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military in the place of Muslim. It is a false cry. You forget that Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military have in the past done all these things — looting, arson, abduction, rape. I come from Kathiawad — the land of petty principalities. I cannot describe to you to what depths of depravity human nature can go. No woman's honour is safe in some principalities and the chief is no hooligan but a duly annointed one."

"These are cases of individual depravity. Here we have got this on a mass scale."

"But the individual there is not alone. He is backed by the machinery of his little State."

A Poor Consolation

"He is condemned even by his compeers. Here such acts are not condemned by the Muslims."

"I have heard nothing but condemnation of these acts from Saheed Suhrawardy downwards since I have come here. Words of condemnation may tickle your ears. But they are no consolation to the unfortunate women whose houses have been laid desolate or who have been abducted, forcibly converted and forcibly married."

"What a shame for Hindus, what a disgrace for Islam," he exclaimed warming up. "No, I am not going to leave you in peace. Presently you will say to yourself, 'When will this man leave us and go?' But this man will not go. He did not come on your invitation and he will go on his own only, but with your blessings, when his mission in East Bengal is fulfilled."

"It is a part of their plan for Pakistan," put in one member of the deputation.

"It is midsummer madness and they have realized it. They will soon sicken of it. They have already begun to."

"Why do not they come here then and set this right?"

"That stage will come. Sickness only marks the crisis. Convalescence must precede cure." "You see I am a nature-curist," he added with a sardonic laugh in which all joined.

The Fallacy of Numbers

"But here we are a mere drop in the ocean," remarked another friend resuming the discussion.

Gandhiji replied that even if there was one Hindu in East Bengal, he wanted him to have the courage to go and live in the midst of the Mussalmans and die if he must like a hero. He should refuse to live as a serf and a slave. He might not have the non-violent strength to die without fighting. But he could command their admiration if he had the courage not to submit to wrong and died fighting like a man. "There is not a man,

however cruel and hard-hearted, but would give his admiration to a brave man. A *goonda* is not the vile man he is imagined to be. He is not without his noble traits."

The friend who was leading the argument however was still sceptical. "A *goonda* does not understand reason," he said.

"But he understands bravery," replied Gandhiji. "If he finds that you are braver than he, he will respect you."

ARMOURY RAID TRADITION

"You will note," continued Gandhiji, "that for the purposes of our present discussion I have not asked you to discard the use of arms. I can't provide you with arms. It is not for me to provide arms to the Chittagong Armoury Raid men," he remarked chaffing them. "The most tragic thing about the armoury raid people," he added "is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lop-sided. It did not infect others."

That started a discussion on the Chittagong Armoury Raid group.

"No wonder it could not," answered one of the party. "They were condemned."

"By whom? I may have — that is a different thing."

"The people did do. I am myself an Armoury Raid man."

"They did not. You are no Armoury Raid man or, you should not have been here to tell these things. That so many of them should have remained living witnesses of the things that have happened is in my eyes a tragedy of the first order. If they had shown the same fearlessness and courage to face death in the present crisis as they did when they made that raid, they would have gone down in history as heroes. As it is, they have only inscribed a small footnote in the page of history. You will see I am not, as I have already said, asking you just now to unlearn the use of arms or to follow my type of heroism. I have not made it good even in my own case. I have come here to test it in East Bengal. I want you to take up the conventional type of heroism. You should be able to infect others — both men and women — with courage and fearlessness to face death when the alternative is dishonour and humiliation. Then the Hindus can stay in East Bengal, not otherwise. After all, the Mussalmans are blood of our blood and bone of our bone."

"Here the proportion of Mussalmans and Hindus is 6 to 1. How can you expect us to stand against such heavy odds?"

"When India was brought under British subjection, there were 70,000 European soldiers against 33 crores of Indians."

"We have no arms. The Government backs them with its bayonets."

"The odds were much heavier against the Indians in South Africa. The Indian community there was a mere handful in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Negroes. The Europeans had arms. We had none. So we forged the weapon of Satyagraha. Today the Indian is respected by the White man in South Africa, not so the Zulu with all his fine physique."

"So we are to fight with arms anyhow?" the friend finally asked.

"Not anyhow," replied Gandhiji. "Even violence has its code of ethics. For instance, to butcher helpless old men, women and children is not bravery but rank cowardice. Chivalry requires that they should be protected even at the cost of one's life. The history of early Islam is replete with such instances of chivalry and Islam is all the stronger for them."

BRAVERY OR BRUTALITY?

"Would you permit the Hindus to take the offensive?"

"The people of Bihar did and brought disgrace upon themselves and India. They have set the clock of India's independence backward. I have a right to speak about Bihar. In a sense I feel closer to Bihar than to Bengal as fortune enabled me to give a striking demonstration of the non-violence technique in Champaran. I have heard it said that the retaliation in Bihar has 'cooled' the Muslims down. They mean it has cowed them down for the time being. They forget that wo can play at a game. Bihar has forged a link in the chain of our slavery. If the Bihar performance is repeated or if the Bihar mentality does not mend, you may note down my words in your diary: ***Before long India will pass under the yoke of the Big Three with one of them probably as the mandatory power. The independence of India is today at stake in Bengal and Bihar.*** The British Government entrusted the Congress with power not because they are in love with the Congress but because they had faith that the Congress would use it wisely and well, not abuse it. Today Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru finds the ground slipping from under his feet. But he won't let that happen. That is why he is in Bihar. He has said he is going to stay there as long as it may be necessary."

"Biharis have behaved as cowards," he added with deep anguish. "Use your arms well, if you must. Do not ill-use them. Bihar has not used its arms well. If the Biharis wanted to retaliate, they could have gone to Noakhali and died to a man. But for a thousand Hindus to fall upon a handful of Mussalmans — men, women and children — living in their midst is no retaliation but just brutality. It is the privilege of arms to protect the weak and helpless. The best succour that Bihar could have given to the Hindus of East Bengal would have been to guarantee with their own lives the absolute safety of the Muslim population living in their midst. Their example would have told. And I have faith that they will still do so with due repentance when the present madness has passed away. Anyway that is the price I have put upon my life, if they want me to live. Here ends the first lesson."

Kazirkhil, 18-11-'46 PYARELAL

WEEKLY LETTER

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anxious that peace should be re-established, they were not prepared to do anything for it or give any guarantee, unless the Muslim League leaders asked them to. Gandhiji recognizing the reasonableness of their suggestion referred to a statement of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah which he had read that morning. He did not like everything in that statement but there were some things in it which should commend themselves to all. In that statement Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had said: "If the Mussalmans lose their balance and give vent to the spirit of vengeance and retaliation and prove false to the highest codes of morality and preachings of our great religion Islam, you will not only lose your title to the claim of Pakistan but also it will start a most vicious circle of bloodshed and cruelty, which will at once put off the day of our freedom and we shall only be helping to prolong the period of slavery and bondage." He had further said: "We must prove politically that we are brave, generous and trustworthy, . . . that in the Pakistan areas the minorities will enjoy the fullest security of life, property and honour just as the Mussalmans themselves, nay even greater." He would like them, remarked Gandhiji, to ponder over that statement, if on examination they found that his quotation was correct. Murder, loot, arson, abduction and forcible marriages and forcible conversions could not but prolong India's slavery. If they kept on quarrelling among themselves, if they looked to the police and the military for protection, they would be inciting the third party to rule over them.

HEART AGONY

At Kazirkhil Gandhiji's camp has been fixed up in a partially devastated house. The miscreants were not able to burn down the place completely. An advance party of Shri Satish Babu's men had cleaned it up and made it habitable. There was a small gathering for the prayers in the compound of the house. Addressing them after prayer on the first day Gandhiji said he found indescribable peace in the natural scenery around him but he found that peace missing on the faces of the men and women. And how could they have peace after all that they had been through? He found a number of guards standing there to protect him and his party. Against whom were they to protect him? He was not used to go about with a guard. He had toured in Bengal unprotected before this. "But today the authorities would not let me do so. It is a matter of sorrow and shame for me and more than me it should be a matter of shame for the Mussalmans of East Bengal."

Even the schools and temples had been destroyed, he proceeded. Shamsuddin Saheb, their Minister, did not like it. The happenings in East Bengal, he said, had hurt him deeply. The hearts of the people had to be purged of hatred. For that their (the Mussalmans') help and cooperation was necessary.

THIS FRATRICIDE

This fratricide was more awful than anything in his experience, he said. He had carried on a grim struggle for 20 years in South Africa and for the last 30 years in India. But this mutual slaughter had non-plussed him. He did not know how he could induce the two communities to live in peace and harmony again. He had come to Bengal to find a solution for the problem. Bengal was a big province. If the communal problem could be solved here, it would be solved elsewhere also. If he succeeded here, he would go away from Bengal with a new lease of life. If not, he wished God to remove him from this earth. He did not wish to leave Bengal empty-handed. The word "pessimism" was not to be found in his dictionary.

The Muslims butchered the Hindus and did worse things than butchery in Bengal, he proceeded, and the Hindus butchered the Muslims in Bihar. When both acted wickedly it was no use making comparisons or saying one was less wicked than the other or who started the trouble. If they wished to take revenge they should learn the art from him. He also took revenge, but it was of a different type. He had read a Gujarati poem in his childhood which said: "If to him who gives you a glass of water, you give two, there is no merit in it. Real merit lies in doing good to him who does you evil. "That," concluded Gandhiji, "I consider noble revenge."

He had read a story about one of the earlier Caliphs. A man attacked the Caliph with a sword. The Caliph wrested the sword from the assailant's hands and was going to kill him when the assailant spat on his face. The Caliph thereupon let him go free because the indignity had filled him with personal anger. This produced a great impression upon the assailant and he embraced Islam. One who was forcibly converted to Islam ceased to be a man. To recite the *Kalma* through fear was meaningless.

A CALL TO INTROSPECTION

The prayer meeting of the fifteenth was held in the *maidan* in front of the school building at Ramganj. In his address after the prayer Gandhiji reiterated and emphasized his previous day's appeal. He could talk to them of nothing but sorrow and suffering these days. Wherever he went he saw awful sights of destruction. There were no tears in his eyes. He who shed tears could not wipe those of others, but his heart did weep. He had come with the hope that he could have a frank talk with the Mussalmans and that they would repent of their misdeeds and request the Hindus not to leave their homes. If the repentance was genuine, the Hindus would recognize their sincerity and regain lost confidence. But he could see that the Hindus and the Muslims of East Bengal had been embittered against one another. He would not go into the reasons thereof. But the Muslim brethren would permit him to say that so far as he knew, in East Bengal they had been the aggressors. The Hindus were mortally afraid of them. At Chaumuhani, continued Gandhiji, Muslims came to his meeting in large numbers, larger than the Hindus. But he did not know why they were avoiding him after the first meeting at Dattapara. It hurt him. He wanted the few Mussalmans who were present in the meeting to carry his message to the rest. A

Muslim sister who had been going about meeting the leading Muslims in these parts had said that the Muslims told her plainly that they wanted orders from the League leaders before they could promise to befriend the Hindus or attend Gandhiji's meetings. The exodus of the Hindus was still continuing. If the Muslims assured them that they were neighbours, friends and brothers, sons of the same soil, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, that the Hindus had nothing to fear from them, the exodus would stop and even those who had left their homes would return. Even animals were friendly to those who befriended them. But man was made in the image of God. To justify his inheritance, man had to return good for evil. Whosesoever was the fault, this truth applied to both the parties. The Muslims wanted orders from the League. He could understand it. There was a League Government in the province. But that did not mean that the Government should be inimical to those outside the League.

He reiterated what he said about Qaid-e- Azam Jinnah Saheb's message on the previous day. They should search their hearts and ask themselves if they had lived up to that message. "So far as I know, Islam does not permit forcible conversion and atrocities on women. What good can a mere repetition of the *Kalma* do to one whose heart does not accept Islam? You should ask your leaders, therefore, whether you are to be friends with the Hindus or enemies and tell me. If you wish to be enemies, the Hindus should be asked to leave East Bengal. For myself, I have come to stay in East Bengal till there is reconciliation between the two."

Kazirkhil, 17-11-'46 PYARELAL

A PROHIBITION ANTHOLOGY

(Continued from No. 31, Page 304)

[For reference to the text in **10**, I am indebted to Macdonell and Keith's Vedic Index; for **11** to S. Hicks' *Difficulties* (Duckworth); for **13** to Mosley's *Night Haunts of London* (S. Paul); for **14** to Hiralal Jadavrai Buch's *Devibhagavata* (G. M. Vaishya); and for **16, 17** and **18** to Norman E. Richardson's *The Liquor Problem* (Methodist Book Concern, New York). V. G. D.].

10

सुरां पिबन् . . . ब्रह्महा चैते पतन्ति ।

छान्दोग्य उपनिषद् (५-१०-९)

"The murderer of a Brahmin, the drunkard . . . these fall (from grace)."

11

Not 95 per cent of all the crime which has come before me during my long years on the bench should be attributed to drink, but 99 per cent of it.

Lord Brampton

12

Syphilis and use of alcohol as beverage together are responsible for more than half the disease and early death of the mature population of Europe.

E. Ray Lankester in *Kingdom of Man*

13

"One of the chief incitements to unchastity is indulgence in alcoholic drinks."

National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases.

14

प्रभासे यादवाः सर्वे . . . . . . ॥ ३ ॥
ते पीत्वा मदिरां मत्ताः कृत्वा युद्धं परस्परम् ।
क्षयं प्राप्ता महात्मानः पश्यतो रामकृष्णयोः ॥ ४ ॥

देवीभागवत २-८ ।

"At Prabhasa, all the Yadavas took liquor, in a fit of intoxication fought among themselves and met their doom. Balarama and Krishna saw this but were helpless.

15

Alcohol kills more men than war, and kills them in a dishonourable manner. —Cardinal Mercier

16

Many (drinking places), depend upon the debauching of women as a source of indirect revenue.

North American Wine and Spirit Journal, (March 1913)

17

"In the tug of war between life and death, drink pulls on the graveyard side."

18

If the drink habit could be eradicated from the nation, this court might close its doors at any rate for the greater part of the time.

Lord Gorell, President of English Divorce Court

V. G. D.

THE MESSAGE OF KHADI

If every village, and every home in it, becomes self-sufficient in the production of food, clothing, other village manufactures and animal husbandry and avoids unnecessary interdependence while not excluding mutual co-operation wherever desirable, society will naturally become self-reliant and free. Competition being replaced by mutual co-operation in such a society there will be equality in the true sense of the term. Such a society must be a non-violent society.

To establish a non-violent social order in the early childhood of the human race was perhaps not possible. But when the human race has come of age, it should naturally become non-violent. With the progress of knowledge and science, an awakened and virile society will spontaneously come to realize that non-violence is the rule of life and that therein alone lies safety. Experience is the best teacher. Non-violence, arrived at as a result of experience, is likely to prove enduring. If even after all it has gone through during the last five to ten thousand years of its history, the human race does not turn to non-violence it is doomed indeed.

A non-violent order cannot be established by mere preaching. It requires healthy living and a particular type of organization and a particular outlook on life. The systems of Government that one sees in the world today are incompatible with a non-violent society. Instead of relying on the best in human nature, they rely on its baser side such as selfishness, greed, fear, pride etc. These tendencies are fostered by the twin expedient of punishment and reward. Living under such a system degrades one. It could not be otherwise. Our life has become unnatural and with that our ideals and thinking. Society is sick.

A man suffering from scabies experiences great relief when he scratches his skin. It does not therefore mean that the desire to scratch is a healthy one. Similarly the fact that the present day culture satisfies certain cravings and appetites of ours does not mean that it is healthy. He whose mind is filled with the craving for sex indulgence is impervious to argument however forceful. Edward Carpenter wrote a masterly book describing the present disease and its cure. But it fell flat. Society did not mend its ways. Two world wars in one generation have brought the world to the brink of destruction. Spiritual culture is India's heritage, though today India itself seems to have repudiated it. May it not be India's privilege still to return to it and point the way to others? It is in that hope that Gandhiji has set to work out the ideal of self-reliance and self-sufficiency for India's villages.

In spite of the progress that science has made, better communications and close financial and economic ties among the various countries of the world, there is shortage of food and clothing all over. A system which has given rise to such a grave situation must be reformed. That can only be done by accepting the principle of non-violence which in the economic field is translated as self-reliance, and of which Khadi is the supreme symbol.

KAKA KALELKAR

(*Abridged by S. N. from the Original in Gujarati*)

AN APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE

The following is the text of Gandhiji's speech delivered in Hindustani at the prayer meeting at Dattapara on the evening of the 10th November:

"Whether you believe me or not, I want to assure you that I am a servant of both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I have not come here to fight Pakistan. If India is destined to be partitioned, I cannot prevent it. But I wish to tell you that Pakistan cannot be established by force. In the *bhajan* that was just sung the poet has likened God to the philosopher's stone. The proverbial philosopher's stone is said to turn iron into gold. That is not always desirable. For instance, if all the rails of the railway track were turned into gold by the touch of the stone, the trains would not be able to run over them. But the touch of God purifies the soul. That is always desirable.

"That philosopher's stone is within us all. All that I wish to tell my Muslim brethren is that, whether they live as one people or two, they should live as friends with the Hindus. If they do not wish to do so, they should say so plainly. I would in that case confess myself defeated. The refugees cannot stay on as refugees for ever. The Government cannot go on feeding them. And what sort of feed are they getting? Less than half the daily ration of cereals to keep an able-bodied man alive, no fish, no vegetables, nor anything else to supplement it. It is not possible for them to exist like this for any length of time. If, therefore, the Muslims do not want them back in their villages, they must go elsewhere.

"But even if every Hindu of East Bengal went away, I will still continue to live amidst the Muslims of East Bengal and eat what they give me and what I consider lawful for me to partake of. I will not bring my food from outside. I do not need fish or flesh. All that I need is a little fruit, vegetables and some goat's milk. As far as goat's milk and cereals are concerned, I would take them again only when it pleases God that I should do so. I have given it up and would not resume it till the Hindus were really penitent of what they had done in Bihar.

"For a thousand Hindus to surround a hundred Mussalmans or for a thousand Mussalmans to surround a hundred Hindus and oppress them is not bravery but cowardice. A fair fight means even numbers and previous notice. That does not mean that I approve of their fighting. It has been said that the Hindus and the Muslims cannot stay together as friends or co-operate with each other. No one can make me believe that, but if that is your belief, you should say so. I would in that case not ask the Hindus to return to their homes. They would leave East Bengal and it would be a shame for both the Mussalmans and the Hindus. If, on the other hand, you want the Hindus to stay in your midst, you should tell them that they need not look to the military for protection but to their Muslim brethren instead. Their daughters and sisters and mothers are your own daughters, sisters and mothers and you should protect them with your lives. I addressed them in the refugee camp yesterday. The District Magistrate Mr. McInerny told them that all mankind being descended from Adam and Eve, they were all members of one family — relatives, whatever, their race or religion. So they should live together as relatives.

"One man is said to have returned to his village last evening after the prayer meeting. He found his house surrounded by Muslims. They would not let him take his property. How can I, under these circumstances (if they are true), ask anyone to go back? You should ponder over what I have said and let me know what you really wish. I shall advise the Hindus accordingly.

"I am told and I believe that there are many good Muslims who would welcome the Hindus back but the *goondas* stand in the way. I wish to tell you that if the good Muslims spoke out with one voice and acted according to their professions, the so-called *goondas* would become ineffective and would mend their ways."

Kazirkhil, 16-11-'46

PYARELAL

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